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Progress towards the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2056 (2012) of 5 July 2012, in which the Council requested me to develop and implement, in consultation with regional organizations, a United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel region, encompassing security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues. It is also submitted pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 16 July 2013 (S/PRST/2013/10), in which I was requested to submit a report on progress made towards the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel by no later than 30 June 2014. In the same statement, the Council requested the United Nations to establish an effective and detailed coordination mechanism for the implementation of the integrated strategy.

2. The present report summarizes the main developments in the region from 1 July 2013 to 30 May 2014, and provides an update on the status of implementation of the three pillars of the integrated strategy, namely, governance, security and resilience. It also provides a brief update on other regional initiatives and summarizes the activities of the United Nations in order to enhance coordination among them.

II. Developments in the Sahel region

3. For the purposes of implementing the integrated strategy for the Sahel, the United Nations continued to apply a flexible definition of the broader Sahelo-Saharan region, encompassing West, Central and North African countries and focusing on regional developments and activities. During the reporting period, some initially encouraging developments were reported in Mali, where the stabilizing situation had resulted in the return of some refugees from neighbouring countries and greater levels of return of internally displaced persons. This trend may, unfortunately, be reversed following the recent deterioration of the security situation in the north of Mali. In addition, the region continues to be confronted by governance, security, humanitarian and development challenges, including cross-

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border crime and increased threats of terrorism, which have generated new flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. Efforts are under way to strengthen cooperation among the countries of the region, including the introduction of new measures to harmonize legal and regulatory frameworks for fighting cross-border crime. As reported below, the countries of the region are taking the lead in pressing for the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel as an instrument for addressing their outstanding challenges.

Governance

4. As more countries in the Sahel prepare to organize elections over the next two years, more needs to be done to ensure inclusive political processes, with wider participation, especially of marginalized communities, women and youth. Efforts to implement existing regional legal instruments, including the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in order to ensure the promotion of credible, transparent and violence-free elections are ongoing at the regional level. Not all countries, however, have demonstrated the same level of political will. Some leaders in the region have emphasized the need to promote the ratification and enforcement of existing normative frameworks that aim to support countries in the region in meeting their commitments with regard to the promotion of credible and transparent elections as well as good governance.

5. Poverty, social exclusion and a lack of resources restrict most people, especially women and youth, from standing for elections or campaigning. The region continues to witness low numbers of women and young people in parliament and senior political positions. In addition, only 55 per cent of children, on average, are registered at birth in Sahelian countries, owing to weak systems for civil registration and the collection of vital statistics. Many children who are not registered at birth are hindered in their efforts to vote later in life because they lack a valid form of legal identification. In some countries, children from ethnic and religious minorities and those living in remote areas or poor households continue to be particularly affected by the lack of a valid identification card.

6. Despite some efforts, the effective functioning of the judiciary in several countries of the region is challenged by limited resources, poor infrastructure and lack of independence from political processes. Other problems associated with the effective functioning of the judiciary include a lack of legal, material and human resources. Efforts in many Sahelian countries to improve access to justice have been constrained by high levels of poverty and illiteracy. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the population in the broader Sahelo-Saharan region has access only to traditional courts, which are not always easily accessible to women, children and migrants. The institutional difficulties of the judiciary are compounded by the absence of effective regional mechanisms that could serve as recourses for citizens.

7. During the reporting period, several Sahelian countries continued to promote a transparent regulatory framework in an effort to attract investors and achieve "emerging economy" status by 2030. Private investment, however, continued to be hindered by protracted and costly commercial adjudication processes. In addition, local arbitration mechanisms are often overstretched or lack the technical capacities to adjudicate transactions that involve multiple parties. Regional mechanisms, such as the arbitration court of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law

in Africa in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Regional Centre for International Commercial Arbitration in Lagos, Nigeria, can provide valuable economies of scale and strengthen warranties, alongside domestic mechanisms.

8. A recurrent and common problem in many countries in the Sahel is the impact of insecurity in border areas on local governance, State authority and territorial control. The permeability of borders, which are largely located in vast and sparsely populated areas, exposes the countries to numerous challenges, including irregular migration, trafficking in illicit drugs, arms and human beings, and the expansion of terrorist networks. Despite continued efforts, fragile State institutions, a lack of statistics and databases and weak border management systems remain serious impediments to national reforms, negatively affecting public and State security, regional integration and economic growth and development.

Security

9. Security in the region remains precarious. The deterioration of the political and security situation in Libya, the political impasse and persisting security challenges in Mali, the increasing number of terrorist attacks throughout the region, notably those carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria, and kidnappings for ransom continue to have negative consequences for civilians and local economies.

10. In Libya, the growing political and security crisis is threatening to derail the democratic transition of the country. While some transitional processes have moved forward, notably the election of the Constitution Drafting Assembly in April 2014 and a number of legislative achievements concerning transitional justice, progress has been limited. Recent tensions between Islamist and non-Islamist forces came to a head in mid-May, with significant clashes in Benghazi and Tripoli. There remains a need for broad agreement on the future of the democratic transition among the major political, tribal and armed actors to enable meaningful progress.

11. In Mali, after initial improvement following the end of major combat operations in 2013, which reduced the capability of terrorist groups, the security situation in the northern part of the country has gradually deteriorated, with a notable increase in the number of improvised explosive devices and indirect fire incidents against Malian forces, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Serval. Furthermore, fighting between the Malian security forces and the armed groups resumed on 21 May 2014, following clashes in Kidal on 16 and 17 May, during a visit of the Prime Minister of Mali, Moussa Mara. An agreement, including a ceasefire, was concluded on 24 May with the decisive interventions of the Chairman of the African Union, the President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and my Special Representative and Head of MINUSMA.

12. A particularly worrying development is the increase in the activities of Boko Haram within and without Nigeria. There is growing evidence that Boko Haram is better equipped and armed and has the potential to destabilize areas around Lake Chad, reportedly benefiting from the porous borders of Nigeria with Cameroon, Chad and the Niger to smuggle in arms and mount attacks against public institutions and civilian populations. The crises in Libya, Mali and Nigeria are destabilizing the broader Sahel region.

13. Organized criminal groups take advantage of the vast and porous borders of the countries of the region, making effective patrolling extremely difficult. They also exploit weak governance structures and political instability to build illicit and terrorist networks that undermine legitimate cross-border relationships. Studies indicate that in 2013, terrorist attacks in the Sahel and the Maghreb increased by an alarming 60 per cent compared with 2012, totalling 230 incidents, the highest annual total in the region for the past 12 years.

14. With the proliferation of criminal activities in the Sahel region, the capacity of terrorist and extremist groups to recruit and radicalize young men and women continues to be a matter of growing concern. Youth under 25 years of age form the largest demographic constituency in West Africa and the Maghreb and are disproportionately affected by the growing unemployment in the Sahel region. Unemployed youth are particularly vulnerable to religious radicalization, while extremist groups are increasingly investing in the development of violent indoctrination, recruiting locally and internationally, and carrying out operations across borders. Extremist and radical ideologies continue to spread in the Sahel region and are driving many young men and women into violence. Consequently, existing social fabrics and local communities are being disrupted and national institutions challenged.

Resilience

15. The humanitarian situation remains extremely fragile in the Sahel region. Food insecurity, malnutrition, disease outbreaks, insecurity and natural disasters continue to affect millions of people. In 2014, at least 20 million people remain at risk for food insecurity (4.1 million of them have already reached at an emergency level) and nearly 5 million children are at risk for acute malnutrition, despite good agricultural and pastoral seasons in 2012 and 2013. Well over 1.5 million people have been internally displaced or are refugees. While food prices have declined somewhat compared with 2013, they remain above the five-year average and have contributed to rising emergency and near-emergency food insecurity levels in northern Mali, the Niger, north-east Nigeria and Senegal.

16. Sahelian populations and economies are particularly exposed and vulnerable to climate-related hazards owing to factors such as the degradation of ecosystems, unplanned urbanization, poverty, gender inequalities and weak governance. Poor households are disproportionately affected by natural disasters, given the high dependency on natural resources for their livelihoods. There is growing evidence that, while environmental and economic shocks in the Sahel region are increasing in frequency and intensity, the coping capacity of the region's poorest is declining. A growing number of households find themselves still struggling to fully recover from one shock when they must start dealing with the next one. In such circumstances, families adopt measures that may relieve the problem in the short term, but often have irreversibly negative long-term consequences.

17. Women are central to the development of rural areas and to national economies. They account for a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force, playing a key role in food production, especially in subsistence farming. At both the local and national levels, they adopt coping mechanisms that allow communities to absorb and recover from natural and economic shocks. However, rural women and girls have restricted access to productive resources, such as land,

agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services and technology, which in turn limits the efficiency of the agricultural sector.

18. Pastoral farming plays a major role in the economies of West Africa and the Sahel, where it contributes extensively to food and nutrition security, livelihoods and economic development. Pastoral systems contribute greatly to the livestock sector's share (10 to 25 per cent) of the gross domestic product (GDP) of countries such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger. Additionally, pastoral production and the related value chains are sources of employment for a large portion of the population.

19. Resource depletion and environmental degradation pose fundamental threats to human security in the Sahel region. By negatively affecting ecosystems, they can destabilize livelihoods and undermine peace and development. The Sahel region encompasses several transboundary river basins, including those of the Gambia, the Niger, the Senegal and the Volta, as well as Lake Chad, all of which have cooperative frameworks. These river basin frameworks are at various stages of development, but their importance is increasing as countries face challenges in managing their water resources in a sustainable and peaceful way as a result of growing populations, rapid urbanization, economic pressures and climate change.

III. Update on the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

A. United Nations high-level events on the Sahel region

20. To ensure a broad consensus for the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, I convened a high-level meeting on the situation in the Sahel on the margins of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, on 26 September 2013, in New York. Member States of the United Nations and representatives of regional and international organizations welcomed the integrated strategy for the Sahel and expressed support for its implementation, while requesting that I ensure coordination with other initiatives in the region. Participants reiterated the need to address the structural causes of instability in the Sahel, including through increased resilience to recurring shocks, and renewed their commitment to work closely together to address the challenges facing the region.

21. From 5 to 7 November 2013, I led a high-level visit to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, the President of the African Development Bank, Donald Kaberuka, and the Commissioner for Development of the European Union, Andris Piebalgs. The joint visit highlighted the commitment of the participating institutions to work together to help Sahelian countries and subregional organizations tackle the structural challenges underlying the recurrent crises in the region. It drew attention to neglected but critical issues, such as the link between security and development, the importance of demographics and of empowering women, and the need to address the food crises that plague the Sahel, prosecute human smugglers, improve conditions in migrants' communities of origin and create safe employment opportunities for migrants. The visit also gave political impetus for the establishment of the coordination platform between countries and organizations in the Sahel.

22. During the visit, the World Bank Group pledged $1.5 billion in new regional investments over a period of two years, in addition to supporting their country programmes. The European Union announced a cumulative amount of 5 billion euros ($6.75 billion) to six countries of the Sahel region over a period of seven years.

B. Activities of my Special Envoy for the Sahel and my Special Representative for West Africa

23. My Special Envoy for the Sahel, Romano Prodi, briefed the Security Council on 12 December 2013 on progress made towards the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. He stressed that its implementation should be premised on empowering Sahelian countries and the regional organizations to own the solutions and initiatives that aim to fight their common challenges. Until the end of his tenure on 31 January 2014, my Special Envoy continued to mobilize the international community to pay close attention to the interrelated security and development challenges facing the region, and placed particular emphasis on the ongoing consultations between the United Nations and the African Development Bank to establish the Sahel Action Fund as an innovative funding mechanism.

24. My Special Envoy visited many Heads of State within and outside the region to raise awareness of the challenges facing the Sahel. With a view to empowering local populations, he visited the region, where he interacted not only with Heads of State and senior government officials, but also with civil society organizations. In order to ensure synergies between his work and that of the United Nations system in the region, he worked very closely with my Special Representative for West Africa, Said Djinnit, including by undertaking joint visits to the region. My Special Envoy and my Special Representative met with the President of Mauritania, in Nouakchott, on 5 October 2013, and with the President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, and the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, on 7 October 2013. My Special Envoy briefed government representatives on progress made towards the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy and urged the establishment of an appropriate coordination mechanism at the political level. These visits signalled to the Governments of the region the commitment of the United Nations to act quickly and in a coordinated manner for the benefit of the region.

25. While the recruitment process for the new Special Envoy for the Sahel was under way, my Special Representative for West Africa demonstrated effective leadership in overseeing the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. He travelled on various occasions to countries of the region to meet with Heads of State and ministers of foreign affairs, sometimes accompanied by ministers of economy and planning, to brief them on the ongoing efforts of the United Nations and to update them on progress made in the implementation of the integrated strategy. He also led efforts by the United Nations system in the region to coordinate activities under the framework of the integrated strategy, as described below.

26. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel relocated from Rome to Dakar, effective 1 January 2014 and, on 12 May 2014, I appointed Hiroute Guebre Sellassie as my new Special Envoy for the Sahel to

oversee the implementation of the integrated strategy for the Sahel. The office is collocated with that of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA).

C. Activities of the United Nations system in the region

Setting up a United Nations coordination mechanism for the effective implementation of the integrated strategy

27. In response to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 16 July 2013, in which UNOWA was requested to establish within the United Nations an effective and detailed coordination mechanism for the implementation of the integrated strategy for the Sahel, my Special Representative for West Africa set up a steering committee and three United Nations regional inter-agency working groups on governance, security and resilience, as already indicated in my report on the activities of the Office dated 11 December 2013 (S/2013/732) . My Special Envoy for the Sahel will chair the steering committee following her appointment. The committee provides overall strategic guidance and oversees concerted inter-agency efforts for the implementation of the integrated strategy. It comprises the Regional Directors' Team, the resident coordinators in Sahelian countries and the conveners of the three regional working groups.

28. The three working groups are responsible for coordinating the implementation of projects with a regional focus in the areas of governance, security and resilience. The Regional Working Group on Governance, which is convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has prioritized the implementation of activities that focus on strengthening: (a) national justice systems; (b) electoral processes; and (c) local governance to enhance security and development in border areas.

29. The Regional Working Group on Security, convened by UNOWA, focuses on strengthening the capacity of national and regional security mechanisms to address cross-border threats. It has prioritized the implementation of activities that aim: (a) to enhance border management, including border control, in partnership with subregional and regional organizations and institutions; (b) to assist in the development of comprehensive and integrated regional and national strategies to counter terrorism, transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking, including mechanisms to implement them within the framework of international human rights standards; and (c) to help prevent terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization in conformity with international human rights standards.

30. The Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel convenes the Regional Working Group on Resilience. The activities envisaged under this strategic goal of the integrated strategy are closely aligned with the European Union-led Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative. The Regional Working Group on Resilience has identified 11 concrete areas of activity that have the potential to enhance the resilience of people in the Sahel: (a) natural resource governance in a changing climate; (b) the establishment of a regional strategic food reserve; (c) accelerated progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women; (d) strengthened regional disaster preparedness; (e) cross-border water management; (f) building capacities and reducing vulnerabilities for mobile and host populations; (g) early warning weather forecasts; (h) promotion of the demographic dividend; (i) promotion of livestock health;

(j) measures of support to pastoralism; and (k) improved information management, risk and vulnerability analysis and resilience measurement.

Development of the 2014-2016 implementation plan of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

31. In implementing the integrated strategy for the Sahel, the Regional Working Group on Governance and the Regional Working Group on Security jointly convened, on 1 March 2014, a one-day technical meeting with the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union to agree on common priorities and identify possible joint programming in the areas of governance and security.

32. On 4 March 2014, the conveners of the three regional working groups met in Abuja with the President of ECOWAS and the commissioners in charge of: (a) the implementation of the ECOWAS Sahel strategy; (b) macroeconomic policy; (c) social affairs and gender and education; and (d) science and culture. The conveners also met with members of the ECOWAS task force on the Sahel. Both institutions discussed their respective priorities and programmatic interventions and explored ways to strengthen coordination. As a result of these consultations, activities proposed by the United Nations will be implemented in partnership with ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union, including the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism, and other key partners.

33. The conveners of the three regional working groups also led inter-agency missions to four of the five Sahel countries to provide technical support to them and to help finalize project proposals that respond to the national priorities identified under the three goals of the integrated strategy. They visited Chad from 16 to 20 December 2013; Burkina Faso from 18 to 22 February 2014; the Niger from 24 to 25 February 2014; and Mauritania from 23 to 26 March 2014. These missions encountered varying levels of progress on the development of project proposals across countries. They also provided an opportunity to sensitize national authorities and key stakeholders, including the United Nations country teams, financial and technical partners and civil society organizations, on the efforts being deployed at regional and international levels for the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy and on progress to date.

34. National authorities have reiterated their commitment to address the regional challenges of the Sahel and expressed support for and adherence to the implementation of strategies on the Sahel, including the United Nations integrated strategy. Some countries have already put in place mechanisms to help ensure that the regional challenges are properly addressed. The Niger has established subcommittees for each of the strategic goals of the integrated strategy, placed under the authority of the Prime Minister, in the secretariat of the strategy for security and development. Chad has also appointed focal points under each of the three goals. In Mauritania, the Ministry of Economy and Development is the overall focal point for the integrated strategy and the country has designated specific focal points for each goal.

Main achievements and challenges in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

Strategic goal 1: governance

35. During the period under review, the United Nations system and its partners in the region initiated several activities to support the efforts of the Sahelian countries to address governance challenges. UNOWA, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and ECOWAS assisted in the establishment of women's platforms for elections in Mali, and are working with national authorities to put in place a "women's situation room" to monitor the forthcoming elections in Burkina Faso and Mauritania. This joint initiative supports national efforts to promote peaceful elections, reduce political violence and increase women's participation in the electoral process. In addition, in February 2014, UNOWA, UN-Women and ECOWAS launched a database for information and knowledge-sharing on the topic of "Gender, women, peace and security in West Africa" for the Sahel and West Africa.

36. With the support of the Government of Japan, UNDP is implementing a $20 million programme in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, focusing on good governance and human security. In Burkina Faso, UNDP developed the capacity of 700 senior officials who work with the office of the national ombudsperson to facilitate communication between religious and traditional leaders. In Chad, UNDP supported a consultative process to prepare a national disaster risk reduction strategy and a plan for its implementation. In Mali, UNDP supported 100 civil society organizations in promoting social cohesion through local-level dialogue and the involvement of women in the peace process. In Mauritania, UNDP trained government diplomats, officials of national human rights institutions and traditional mediators throughout the country on conflict prevention. In the Niger, UNDP supported government efforts to enhance access to basic social services, job creation and income-generating activities, with a focus on youth, in rural areas across the country.

37. In support of the implementation of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, UNDP complemented the work of the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate by deploying an international expert to undertake vulnerability risk assessments in two countries, Cabo Verde and the Gambia, focusing on guiding the development of early warning and situation analysis. Similar exercises took place in the rest of the Sahel region in 2013. During the ECOWAS consultative meeting for early warning mechanisms and responses that was held in Abidjan in December 2013, UNDP shared information and expertise for the implementation of national infrastructures for peace. UNDP also deployed an international expert to support the ECCAS department of peace, security and diplomacy to review the status of implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Central African region. The expert identified gaps in order to strengthen ECCAS capacities on conflict prevention and management for the full operationalization of the Architecture.

38. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has taken concrete steps, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), to strengthen the capacity of civil society, the media and parliamentarians for better public resources management in the Sahel region. With regard to the rights of children, UNICEF supported the work of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil

Registration and Vital Statistics by promoting birth registration of all children in the Sahel region. In 2014, UNICEF started developing an institutionalized framework for stronger collaboration between health and civil registration systems, in order to ensure interoperability between the two and facilitate service delivery across the Sahel region.

39. In order to improve the employability of youth in the region, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has supported the implementation of national and regional qualifications frameworks in the ECOWAS subregion aimed at strengthening technical and vocational education and training institutions and skills development programmes.

40. In the field of human rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) supported national human rights institutions in the region, particularly in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Gambia and Senegal. OHCHR and its partners also provided technical support to the Network of National Human Rights Institutions in the Economic Community of West African States for capacity-building activities. With regard to support to justice systems in the Sahel region, OHCHR has been reinforcing the capacities of ECOWAS and its Court of Justice to raise awareness regarding the role of the Court. OHCHR continued to support better promotion and protection of women's rights in the Sahel and the ratification of relevant treaties and conventions by the countries of the region. In the framework of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), OHCHR supported Burkina Faso, the Gambia and Senegal in the elaboration of a national action plan.

41. During the reporting period, the United Nations system in the region increased awareness and invested in building the capacity of national authorities to address issues related to migration and trafficking in persons across the Sahel region. In Senegal, in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior, the United Nations facilitated training modules and developed an informational brochure on the protection of the rights of displaced people in border areas.

Strategic goal 2: security

42. The United Nations has launched a number of regional projects since July 2013 to promote security in the Sahel region. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime mobilized almost $13 million to support capacity-building in the region and enhance the accessibility, efficiency and accountability of criminal justice systems in order to combat organized crime, including illicit trafficking, terrorism and corruption. Similarly, in the context of the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and the Maghreb, the Executive Directorate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, in collaboration with partner institutions, held from 13 to 15 May 2014, in Nouakchott, the first meeting of a network of police, customs and intelligence officials from 11 countries of the Sahel and the Maghreb in charge of border control. The meeting facilitated the sharing of good practices and resulted in the establishment of professional networks that aim to strengthen regional cooperation for border control. In addition, the Executive Directorate organized, jointly with the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism, a workshop entitled "Strengthening border-related counter-terrorism capacities in the Sahel and the Maghreb through international databases and enhanced cooperation, coordination and information

exchange", held in Algiers from 3 to 5 March 2014. The workshop, the first on that topic, enhanced the participants' understanding of the benefits of utilizing international border-security databases and promoted their more efficient use. The Executive Directorate also developed a project entitled "Strengthening controls over the cross-border movement of terrorists in areas between official border posts for countries of the Maghreb and the Sahel". The project, which has three phases, is set to be launched in the second half of 2014, in partnership with relevant regional and international organizations.

43. In the framework of the Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism initiative, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force of the Department of Political Affairs has been facilitating, in close cooperation with national authorities and partners, projects in Burkina Faso and Nigeria. In view of the rise in violent extremism and the importance of addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, the Task Force launched, in May 2014, in Nigeria, a project entitled "Countering the appeal of terrorism in Nigeria and building community resilience". The project aims to enhance engagement and dialogue between Governments and civil society organizations on countering violent extremism in order to understand and address the process of radicalization. It will be replicated in requesting Sahelian countries, with adaptations to the specificity of the given country.

44. The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Government of Nigeria co-organized a regional workshop on the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, held in Abuja in October 2013, that brought together counter-terrorism focal points and practitioners from the Sahel region. The workshop endorsed and discussed key elements of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the integrated strategy for the Sahel and the ECOWAS counter-terrorism strategy. Participants emphasized the need for strong political will from Governments to make counter-terrorism measures more relevant, results-oriented and capable of being implemented. They also underscored the importance of building community resilience and of enhancing cooperation between international partners to facilitate practical results.

45. With the support of the Peacebuilding Fund, two pilot projects have been launched in Mali and the Niger to address threats to peace in both countries. In the Niger, the Fund financed a $3 million joint socioeconomic reintegration programme in the Tahoua region (bordering Mali), to prevent a spillover effect from the Mali crisis. The project, implemented in close cooperation with the High Authority for Peace Consolidation, targets youth and their communities, at risk of being recruited by armed groups. In Mali, the Fund is currently financing a $3 million project, implemented by MINUSMA, which aims to increase confidence between armed groups and the Government. Looking forward, the Fund intends to finance a pilot cross-border and arms-control project in local communities in the border area between Mali and the Niger.

Strategic goal 3: resilience

46. With $1.1 billion received (63 per cent of the required $1.7 billion), the Sahel 2013 appeal was considered to be one of the best funded humanitarian appeals for that year. Only the food and nutrition sectors were well funded, however, leaving an imbalance in the response. Recognizing the chronic nature of humanitarian needs in the Sahel, a three-year (2014-2016) strategic response plan has been developed to

promote an integrated multisectoral response and stronger partnerships between the humanitarian and development communities. The plan aims to reach an estimated 15 million people with humanitarian assistance, including food security assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities, as well as nutritional support for children under 5 years of age and support to some 12 million people at risk of epidemics. In 2014, humanitarian needs amount to $2.025 billion, a 19 per cent increase from the funding request of $1.7 billion in 2013.

47. During the reporting period, a number of United Nations regional initiatives made important contributions to the resilience of people in the Sahel. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF have been supporting the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) to strengthen the West Africa and Sahel food security and nutrition situation analysis, including through the development of tools and assessments. Relevant national authorities in six additional countries were trained in food insecurity and nutrition vulnerability analysis, raising the total number of trained countries to 12. UNICEF also supported the West Africa Nutrition Capacity Development Initiative, in partnership with WHO and the Assembly of Health Ministers of ECOWAS, in addressing the shortage of qualified nutrition professionals. UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported ECOWAS to strengthen disaster preparedness mechanisms. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported the Ouagadougou Initiative to enhance capacities to manage population dynamics in the region, accelerating the conditions for achieving a demographic dividend in the Sahel.

48. In addition, a number of regional interventions were in the process of being launched. There has been progress in the establishment of a regional food reserve under the auspices of ECOWAS, with WFP and FAO support. Such a mechanism would provide rapid food assistance during crises at local, national and regional levels. The World Meteorological Organization has launched a programme entitled "Climate services to strengthen resilience", in order to provide decision makers in the Sahel region with climate information and services tailored to their needs, with the objective of steadily reducing human and economic losses related to extreme weather and climate conditions and strengthening the management of water resources. Building on the successful partnership with CILSS, a common methodology on resilience measurement is being developed. In addition, WFP has developed indicators to measure food consumption and coping strategies.

49. Furthermore, UNFPA and the World Bank have launched a programme on harnessing the future of the Sahel through demographic dividends to support improvements in the availability, affordability and utilization of reproductive health commodities, as well as to strengthen data collection and analysis. Demographic and economic analyses were carried out in each Sahelian country to inform the development of evidence-based policies.

50. In addition, a number of new initiatives are currently being planned in close consultation with Governments of Sahelian countries and regional entities, focusing, in particular, on promoting a regional approach to addressing common challenges in the areas of risk and vulnerability analysis, disaster preparedness, natural resource governance, livestock health, pastoralism, migration and women's economic empowerment. Partnerships are being sought with the World Bank, the European Union and bilateral donors for the successful implementation of these initiatives.

51. The Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel has developed a communications strategy with a view to supporting the implementation of all three pillars of the United Nations integrated strategy by providing credible, accurate, timely and impartial information on the role of the United Nations in the process and to manage the expectations of various audiences. The Office works closely with the rest of the United Nations system, regional and international organizations and the Governments of the five countries involved in the integrated strategy to ensure an effective coordination of messages.

IV. Ministerial coordination platform for the Sahel

52. In my last report on the activities of UNOWA (S/2013/732), I informed the Security Council that a coordination platform had been established at a ministerial meeting on the Sahel held in Bamako on 5 November 2013, on the margins of a high-level visit that I undertook in the region together with the President of the World Bank. The platform aims to maintain attention on the important challenges that the region continues to face, facilitate discussion of common priorities for regional initiatives in the Sahel and track the progress resulting, especially, from the coordinated support of the international community. It provides a forum for the United Nations and its partners to coordinate efforts based on complementary strengths. The platform held its second meeting on 16 May 2014 in Bamako under the two-year rotational chairmanship of Mali.

53. The coordination platform meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Abdoulaye Diop, and was attended by Member States of the Sahel region and neighbouring countries, as well as regional and international organizations and financial institutions. My Special Envoy for the Sahel and the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Pierre Buyoya, who are also co-chairs of the technical secretariat of the coordination platform, attended the meeting. Participants endorsed the road map for the coordination platform presented by Mali and renewed their commitment to enhance coordination and rationalize the allocation of resources for regional cooperation initiatives. Participants agreed that a flexible definition of the geographical scope should be adopted by the coordination platform, allowing adjustments based on the specific challenges that each initiative or activity aims to address. They took concrete steps towards improving coordination, including by tasking the technical secretariat with preparing a comparative analysis of the various initiatives on the Sahel, for discussion during the next meeting of the platform, expected to take place in November 2014.

54. My Special Envoy for the Sahel will continue to support the effective functioning of the coordination platform for the Sahel, in close collaboration with the Malian chairmanship and the African Union, as well as with all concerned Member States and representatives of regional and international organizations.

V. Update on other regional initiatives in the Sahel

55. The Sahel region has received renewed attention on account of the crises in Libya and Mali, and thanks to high-level events organized by the United Nations and others. While this attention is a welcome development, it increases the need for better coordination.

56. On 6 February 2014, my Special Representative for West Africa represented the United Nations at a high-level meeting on the Sahel, organized in Brussels by the European Union and chaired by the Minister for National Reconciliation of Mali, Cheick Oumar Diarrah. Participants included ministers of Sahelian countries, representatives of concerned regional and international organizations and interested European Union members and donors. During the meeting, representatives of the European External Action Service reiterated the important role of the coordination platform in ensuring synergies among the various approaches and strategies on the Sahel. In addition, several bilateral and multilateral partners expressed interest in aligning their respective initiatives with the three United Nations working groups on governance, security and resilience. During the meeting, the European Union reiterated its commitment to increase its efforts towards peace, stability and development in the Sahel region, in collaboration with regional and international stakeholders.

57. The Governments of Sahelian countries remain committed to join forces against the threats facing the region, as evidenced by the establishment of the "Group of Five for the Sahel", comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, on 16 February 2014, on the margins of a summit of Heads of State and Government. The Group of Five for the Sahel aims to promote a common vision for regional cooperation in the areas of development and security among the five countries. The Group is currently chaired by the Government of Mauritania and is supported by a secretariat based in Nouakchott. The respective ministers in charge of economy, planning and development are currently developing national priority investment plans.

58. During the sixth meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali, on 2 November 2013, in Bamako, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission announced the establishment of the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), led by the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, with its headquarters in Bamako. MISAHEL focuses on promoting inclusive and effective governance, mainstreaming gender equality and regional security and cooperation in Mali and the Sahel. The African Union spearheaded the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, launched in March 2013, which aims to promote cross-border cooperation and security. As co-chairs of the coordination platform for the Sahel, the United Nations Special Envoy for the Sahel and the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel worked closely together.

59. Other important initiatives in the region included the organization of the second ministerial-level summit on the Sahel, which was held on the margins of the 20th meeting of the Executive Council of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, on 12 March 2014, in Khartoum, and resulted in the adoption of a draft framework for development and security in the Sahelo-Saharan region. ECOWAS has also developed a strategy for the Sahel region that focuses on: (a) peace, security and the fight against terrorism; (b) irrigation, agriculture and resilience; and (c) infrastructure for development. The United Nations was represented at two ministerial-level meetings organized by ECOWAS, the first of which was held in October 2013 in Washington, D.C., and the second of which was held in May 2014 in Abuja, which resulted in the finalization and kick-start of the implementation of the ECOWAS strategy for the Sahel. In addition, the Second Regional Ministerial Conference on

border security between Sahel and Maghreb States took place in Rabat, Morocco, on 13 and 14 November 2013. The participants in the Conference adopted the Rabat Declaration, which included the creation of a regional training centre and the establishment of working groups on security, intelligence, customs and justice that would draft proposals in those areas ahead of the next Conference, expected to be held in Egypt in 2014.

60. The World Bank's regional approach in the Sahel focused on addressing vulnerability, building resilience and promoting economic opportunity and integration through a range of development interventions in areas such as infrastructure, trade and transport, agriculture and irrigation, management of natural resources, livelihoods and neglected diseases. The World Bank and the African Development Bank supported United Nations initiatives in the area of resilience, in addition to making important bilateral contributions in the region.

VI. Observations

61. The Sahel continues to require the attention and commitment of the international community as it faces multifaceted and complex challenges to long-term peace, stability and development. Security in the broader Sahel region is threatened by the heightened activity of terrorist and criminal groups, eroding State authority and negatively affecting opportunities for development. The limited capacity of Governments in the region to ensure the security of their populations, deliver basic services and foster dialogue and citizen participation has a negative effect on the economic and social spheres of life. These humanitarian and security threats require more efficient utilization of available resources for targeted efforts against poverty and insecurity. In this respect, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel is a flexible tool aimed at guiding collective interventions in the region. It is meant to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. It applies a flexible geographic definition, encompassing countries in the broader Sahelo-Saharan region.

62. The momentum generated during the first meeting of Sahelian ministers, on 5 November 2013, in Bamako, which resulted in the establishment of the coordination platform for the Sahel, has inspired new initiatives. The establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which aims to promote a common vision among Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger for regional cooperation in the areas of security and development, was followed by the ECOWAS and African Union strategies for the Sahel that seek to address key issues in the areas of security, development and transnational challenges. I welcome these regional and subregional initiatives, which show ownership and seek to mobilize energy towards addressing short- and long-term challenges to peace and development in the region. They underscore, however, the need for enhanced coordination.

63. Towards this end, the United Nations is committed to continuing to consult regularly with all concerned stakeholders at national, regional and international levels, taking into consideration the interconnections with other regions of the continent, in order to ensure sustained, coherent and coordinated interventions in the Sahel. My Special Envoy for the Sahel and the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, as co-chairs of the technical secretariat of the coordination

platform, will continue to support the effective functioning of the platform, which is entrusted with the overall coordination of the initiatives in the region.

64. The United Nations fully supports and encourages all the countries of the region and their partners to continue to work together in tackling the structural causes of instability and fragility. Success in this endeavour will depend on strong political commitment to bring about meaningful changes in governance and democratization.

65. I would like to renew my appreciation to my former Special Envoy for the Sahel, Mr. Prodi, and his staff for their continuous efforts in favour of peace and development in the Sahel. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Djinnit, for his leadership in establishing the coordination mechanism for the effective implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, and to his team for their dedication. I would also like to express my appreciation to my newly appointed Special Envoy for the Sahel, Ms. Guebre Sellassie, for her speedy engagement in support of the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, immediately upon her appointment. I commend the efforts of the United Nations entities throughout the Sahel region, including the conveners of the three United Nations working groups in Dakar.